

The Packet

Issue 84 Winter 2017/8 Suggested Donation £1



Contact the Committee.

The committee meets on the second Monday of each month at the Coach & Horses, Victoria Road, Draycott, Derbyshire, DE72 3PS at 7:30pm. Thanks Mark and staff for provision of facilities.

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- Front Cover:** An artist's impression of the Co-op cottages when restored.

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People queueing to visit the Co-op Cottages to see the restoration work on open day.



Restoration work at Borrowash.

Message from the Chairman.

Hello Members and friends, welcome to my first message as Chairman of the Society, it is an honour to have been offered the chance to lead such a wonderful group of people that are so dedicated to restoring our Canal.

I have only been associated with you for 5 years and my first day will stay with me for a long time. After I came off the night shift at DHL, my partner Linda, turned around with the immortal words “go get a hobby” – so what do you do, turn up at Swarkestone Lock for the annual Lock-thru, walk up to Chris Madge and say, “my name is Ed Case – how can I help?” – What have I taken on?

I have inherited a Committee that is very dedicated to our aim of restoring the Canal to its former glory, not so much a Committee but a group of friends that give so much of their time and energy that ensures everyday things are done – I thank you all. This help ensures that the momentum currently being attained will be maintained and indeed, increased as 2018 moves on.

For the record I, on behalf of the Committee and the Membership, would like to give our sincere thanks to Chris Madge for the wonderful job he did prior to standing down as Chairman to concentrate more on his role with the Trust.



A lot of work in 2018 will be based at the Canal Cottages at Draycott, we had a wonderful Open Day there in November, with over 250 or so guests visiting the site and our marquee, some superb information obtained from previous residents and lots of local and wider ranging support.

Work at Borrowash is moving on, led by Keith and Roger, we now have an undertaking from WRG to come down for a week in July and help restoring

the lock to its original status, this in turn is being helped by funding from the Borrowash Co-op who have kindly donated over £2,300 to our appeal – this will be all used at Borrowash. This project is Society led, but being supported by the Trust.

Plans are in place after a lot of problems to move the Sandiacre project on; it has been a lot of hard work for the Trust to settle problems that arose from our test pits, but that is what goes on behind the scenes.

The fund raising to restore the Cottages at Draycott carries on, at printing we are at £77,000 and increasing, our target is £100,000 – nearly there – have you pledged yet – please do so, it all helps with match funding from various sources. We can do this, and once we have our first stretch of water in it will, pardon the pun, “open the floodgates”.

Working parties still carry on amazing me, every time I send out an email inviting people to turn out on a cold, wet, windy, freezing day, people turn up in droves, the good nature and sometimes dubious humour makes me smile, thanks ladies and gents and keep turning up, it is appreciated.

Fundraising is something we can all consider, from ladies knitting Christmas hedgehogs that sold out in days and resulted in the ladies stating that they were “hogged up” to attending the numerous shows that we attend to drive up membership and raise our profile, giving as you shop on line, gift membership, recycling ink cartridges, making pledges on behalf of friends and family, it all helps and of course your continued support as members. Please spread the word. Any ideas for fundraising would be welcome as is any offer of support – Do you know a digger driver? A fund raiser? A bricklayer? – the list is endless.

The mention of the Co-op fundraising leaves me with a final note, we have now been accepted as one of the Charities for the Sandiacre group, please support them if you can, 1% goes to local charity over an 11month period, we can benefit a lot from this,



Wishing you all a wonderful 2018. Eddy.

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Bonfires, Barges and Bywashes.

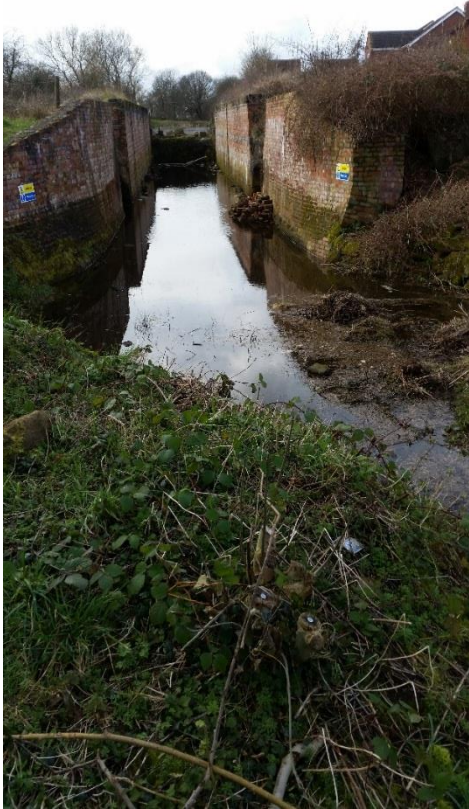
(9 months a volunteer).

When I was invited to contribute an article for The Packet detailing my experiences as a volunteer, it gave me an opportunity to reflect on my reasons for taking a more active role within the society.

Did I become a member of the Wednesday work parties because I had a vision of working side by side with like-minded men and women striving towards a common goal? Was it because I was becoming a couch- potato and needed to do something more active and away from daytime television? Was it a feeling that I was contributing to a project, that once completed would be a legacy to be enjoyed by my children and theirs for generations to come? Or was it simply that I enjoyed a good bonfire? On reflection while the first three reasons were very noble the bonfire was the clincher!!

I travelled up to Borrowash for my first work party on a chilly March morning feeling a little apprehensive. I was met by the work party supervisor, a cheerful man wearing a beanie hat and up to his waist in a muddy trench trying to make a pump to work “Ah, have you come to be a victim - I mean volunteer?” he jovially asked me before displaying amazing mind reading capabilities, how would you like to help out with the bonfires?”. From that moment on I knew I had found my spiritual home. I was made to feel welcome by all the members of the work party and have not looked back since although there have not been as many bonfires as I would have liked. This is usually due to the wind being in the wrong direction, but one lives in hope.

I have found over time that volunteering has become somewhat addictive, I have now started helping at Draycott as well. The changes that the working parties have been making to the Canal Cottages are very noticeable. The open day at the cottages was very successfully with an estimated 250-300 people attending, all having a chance to see the progress and to comment on the plans and proposals for the development of the site.



Volunteers have also made some progress at Borrowash with a start made on restoring the lock, with the gate recesses being rebuilt. Borrowash bottom lock bywash has been uncovered again. The bywash has been badly damaged in places but has been photographed and mapped before covering it over to protect it.

(It was first uncovered in 1996 and buried for the same reason – Ed.)

I used to be an archaeologist in a previous life and was delighted to be able to use my archaeology trowel after a period of more than 30 years. The next task at the lock is to remove all the tree stumps that have grown in the last 20 years. This is in readiness for the WRG work party in July who will restore the displaced quadrant stones to their original position. By the end of summer 2018 the lock will hopefully be fully restored apart from the gates, this restoration will have been solely carried out by volunteers.

May, 2017 saw me taking part in a sponsored narrowboat pull on the Chesterfield canal to raise money for the Draycott project. Being born in an inner city with no experience of boats I wasn't sure what to expect. The boat was twice as wide and seemed twice as long as I had expected. It was a type of boat called a Cuckoo Boat, but I will refrain from the obvious jokes about needing to be cuckoo to pull it! The horse that used to pull it had retired and a new horse was being trained. How much training does a horse need to be able to walk in a straight line and not fall in? A thoroughly enjoyable afternoon was had by all. The weather was lovely, the company excellent and the pub adjacent to the finishing line was very welcoming.

Over the past 9 months the sense of enjoyment, satisfaction and achievement I have gained from involvement with the society has been immeasurable. There is a real feeling of momentum building at the society and that at last significant progress is made in putting some of the canal back in water. More volunteers are always needed, not just on the visible work party side of things, there is as much need for behind the scenes volunteers as well. The society is looking for professional fundraisers, people who have experience of completing grant applications or approaching corporations. We also need people who have civil engineering qualifications or a civil engineering back ground.

Volunteering is not arduous or time consuming, it need only take a few hours a month but those few hours can make a big difference in helping the overall progression to re-watering our canal. If you do want to come down on Wednesdays or Sundays you will be made welcome, you do not need any specific skills. All you need are a pair of stout boots, a warm drink and a box of matches just in case the wind is in the right direction.

Gary Harding.

History.

I was watching Lunchtime TV, "What is it Worth" it is a quiz type show about antiques. Surprise, surprise one of the items was an original DERBY CANAL SHARE CERTIFICATE No 532. Date 1793. Name John Clarke Wayne Millen? It was valued at £1,000.

There was an Act of Parliament for "Making and Maintaining a Navigable Canal from the River Trent at or near Swarkston (*sic*) Bridge through Derby to Little Eaton and Borrowash and for making Railways to serve Collieries. In several parishes of Denby. Horsley and Smalley,"

The Act was 1793. and the canal was fully completed in 1796 and closed in 1964.

I wonder if any of our members or friends of the Canal have somewhere hidden away one of the original Share Certificates.

Eileen Holland.

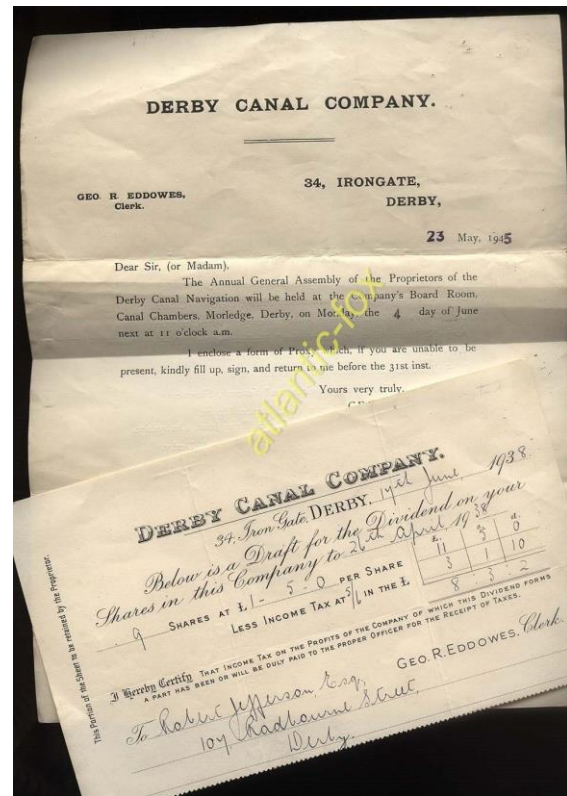
Canal Memories. (2 articles from Packet 44, Summer, 2003).

In the spring 2002 issue of "The Packet" I explained how I had been puzzled about the water supply arrangements for the Derby Canal ever since I studied Pegg's and Day's Locks in 1962. In the summer issue there was an article by David Ford which confirmed that the iron aqueduct at the Holmes was indeed an overflow for surplus water.

I therefore decided to do a little research into the water supply arrangements and I now set down what I believe to be correct, though it is certainly not yet complete.

I have included a sketch diagram which is not to scale but is based on the 1852 Board of Health map of Derby (in the Local Studies Library). (*unfortunately not available – Ed*). The mitre directions of lock gates are as shown on that map. It has to be remembered that when the canal was constructed, mill owners already using the River Derwent to power machinery or for processing did not like newcomers taking water away since this could affect their operations. The purpose of Phoenix Lock was to limit the amount of water coming into the canal at normal river flows.

The surface level of the water in the canal basin was the same as that of water just flowing over St Michael's Weir.



A Similar Certificate.



Left to right centrally: Silk Mill, Sowter's Weir, Phoenix Arm & Lock.

In his book "Benjamin Outram," Professor Schofield states (page 64) that water was only allowed to be taken through Phoenix Lock for a period of 24 hours from 8 p.m. Saturdays. The reversed mitred gates on Phoenix Lock were probably to prevent the canal emptying back into the river if the level of water behind St Michael's Weir dropped below the weir top. This could happen under drought conditions if the Silk Mill was using more water than the river flow. Phoenix Lock would also prevent a rise in canal level and a strong flow down the canal channel at times of high flows when the level of water over the top of the weir would rise.

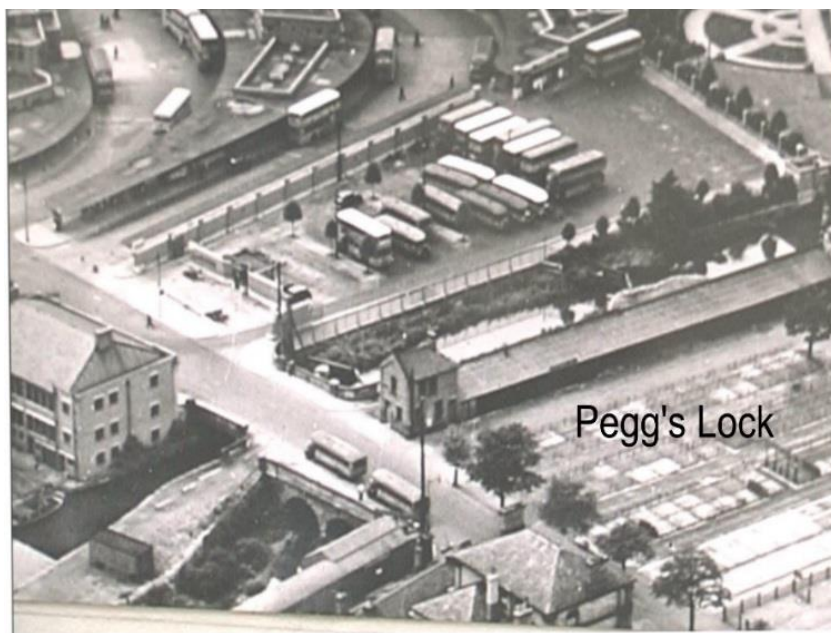
Day's Flood Lock showing reversed mitred gates



Alan Jeffreys sent me a sketch map based on the original Derby Canal plans and this substantially agrees with the 1852 map. The plans, and also Professor Schofield's book confirm the existence of a conduit which, in the Derby Canal Act, was planned as a 36" diameter cast iron pipe running from just above White Bear Lock, through the weir and discharging just above Day's Lock. Thus the water for both sections of canal was taken via Phoenix Lock. The surface height

of water above White Bear Lock was the same as above Day's Lock because of the conduit. In his book Professor Schofield says that when the Long Weir was repaired in the 1970s no cast iron pipe was found. Instead, there was a rectangular cavity 3ft high and 2ft wide formed in the foundations of the weir through which the water flowed. In a telephone conversation I had with Prof. Schofield he stated that he thought the height of the overflow on the iron aqueduct was set the same as the height of the top of the Long Weir. At normal river flows boats would not need to use the gates of Pegg's Lock. However, with high flows the water level over the weir would rise. Without Pegg's Lock there would be a strong flow in the canal and over the edge of the iron aqueduct.

That is the explanation for boats apparently having to lock downhill, go a few yards and then lock uphill. The reverse mitred gates on Day's Lock were presumably to try to prevent a high flow of water into the canal during flood. The 1852 map does not show reversed mitred gates on either White Bear Lock or Pegg's Lock but Alan Jeffreys' plan does. It seems likely that such gates would be needed on White Bear Lock to keep flood water out of the Sandiacre Line. If Pegg's Lock was equipped with a pair of reverse mitred gates, then these would presumably be to prevent the canal from emptying if the river level behind the weir fell.



Pegg's Lock. Bus station top left, river gardens top right, Tinkler & Hudson, bottom left.

The reverse mitred gates on both Phoenix and Day's Locks are shown on Alan Jeffreys' plan at the opposite end of the locks to where they are shown on the 1852 map. Both the plan and a map in Prof. Schofield's book shows a weir incorporating a flash lock across the

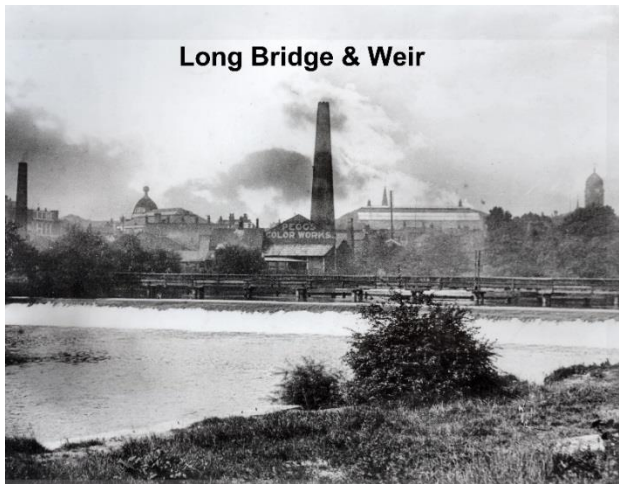
Derwent just below Exeter Bridge. It is likely that the water arrangements in this area changed over the years. It would certainly be interesting to know exactly what water arrangements were used by the various mills in Derby.

David Ford says he does not know how the conduit could have crossed the Derwent navigation channel. Presumably, this was on the masonry aqueduct, below the towpath. Whilst Alan Jeffreys' plan is not clear, Prof Schofield states that the conduit was run beneath the towpaths each side of the river. Was the water that David Ford saw flowing into the Derwent Navigation channel in fact coming from the conduit?

At the time he was looking at the canal the water levels had been dropped and no supply would be needed to the southern summit level. It could be that a sluice in the conduit had been opened to prevent water reaching Day's Lock.

It is unfortunate the spot heights shown on the 1852 map are not water surface levels but are heights at points on or near the towpath, making them unreliable for deducing water flows.

H.F.G. Gwyther.



I enjoyed Harold Gwyther's reflections on the water feed arrangement on the former Derby Canal and would like to add a few comments on them. I believe that the reverse mitre lock at Phoenix Lock and the one at Day's Lock were built in the event of a breach in the wall of the canal. The Siddals Road stretch of the canal above Day's Lock was considerably higher than the mill race that ran alongside it, and any breach would have emptied the pound behind the Ice Factory.

The short stretch of canal between Phoenix Lock and its confluence with the river was about six feet higher than the arm of the river that ran around the island and alongside it. I remember that the narrow neck of land dividing the canal from this extremely fast flowing arm of the river was around 80 yards long and constructed mainly of rock. Any breach in this would have made the whole canal system inoperable.

St. Michael's Weir (we called it Sowter's Weir) did not control the level of the river. The other arm of the weir from the island to the mouth of the canal was about 2ft lower than St. Michael's and in summer St. Michael's weir was often dry.

I would like to thank both Harold and for enlightening me to the existence of the conduit running through the weir. As an 8 year-old in 1944, I almost drowned in the whirlpool caused by water entering this conduit above White Bear Lock.

We always thought the whirlpool was surplus water running underground into the lock and never dreamt that was linked up to the Swarkestone branch of the canal.

I was reminiscing how the canal behind Erasmus Street. suffered badly from silting up (Italian prisoners of war were employed in cleaning out the canal from its confluence with the river, along the Nottingham Road. stretch and then down through White Bear Lock in the late 1940s) when it occurred to me what the paddle situated a few yards from the top of the Longbridge weir was for. I believed that it was linked to the water crashing down into the Derwent navigation (as I call it) but I could never think of a reason why it did so. I now think that it was used to flush out the conduit running through the weir. There would have been no other way of removing the mud and silt from it and it would have quickly become inoperable. This paddle can be seen clearly on the photographs of the Longbridge published in the Hidden Beauties edition of the Derby Evening Telegraph and the site where it stood is pretty much the same today as it always was. The paddle operated down a boarded over shaft that as children we thought was a well.

Perhaps some archaeological society could organise a dig there, or will we have to wait until the Riverlights scheme destroys it forever.

Dave Ford.

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Waterways Recovery Group (WRG) visit July, 2018. By David Savidge.

A couple of months ago, we were asked by Jenny Black of WRG if they could help with any project on the Derby Canal to aid our restoration plans. The immediate response was **YES** (very loudly from everyone asked). Then came the problem, that out of all the various projects, which would aid our plans best and make the greatest impact.

We have already done a lot of work at Borrowash Bottom Lock (Shacklecross) in clearing the over-grown vegetation and starting to rebuild the brickwork to the lower gate recesses. However, it was agreed that we needed help to sort out the jigsaw of stones to the top ground paddle areas and refitting the missing coping stones to the lock edge. After a visit to inspect the site by Jenny and members of the WRG Forestry team, who were helping us with the removal of some large trees, we were told that we had been successful and would be hosting a canal restoration camp in July, 2018. This will be a week long camp from the 21st to the 28th of July, 2018 for up to 18 volunteers from around the country.

To prepare for the visit, we are in the process of measuring all the loose stones and the ground paddle areas and lock edges to try to work out which stone goes where. A 3D drawing will be produced to show the position that the stones should be moved to. We will be able to calculate from the list of stones the weight of each stone and establish the easiest way to move and handle the stones into their correct position. If you have been to see the progress that our Wednesday Working Party has done at the lock, you will have noticed that the majority of the stones have large white numbers painted on.

We will also have to plan how we move the required lifting equipment onto the site, along with all the facilities and tools that the Worgies will need for the work camp.

Also, we have to find accommodation for the volunteers for the week. They like to be within 3 miles of the site, to cut down on travelling each day, and like to all be in one place for sleeping (floor of a school hall or similar) and eating. The building, ideally, needs to have cooking facilities, showers and toilets. The other main request, which some feel is the most important, is that it must be within easy walking distance to at least one good pub. Although I'm told that they sometimes bring their own barrel of beer! The building need to be secure and they must have sole use of the building for the week, as they will be leaving all their bedding and clothes there. If anyone knows of a suitable room / hall, then let me know so that I can visit it.

The Society and Trust are all looking forward to the visit, which will highlight our canal project across the whole of the Britain and overseas. If this goes well, we could have future visits from the other Worgies teams.

As this is the first week of the school holidays, we need to cross our finger that we have dry weather for the week prior and the week of the visit to ensure they don't become wet and muddy.

This recognition of their support to our canal restoration will give our project national publicity and hopefully give a further boost to the full restoration of the canal.

Webmaster.

I hope that most of you will have noticed by now, but we've had a major update to the website!

The website address has remained the same; **www.derbycanal.org.uk**

Skilfully aided by 'LittleFox Web Design', based locally in Castle Donington, the new website has a fresh modern look; the site is automatically optimised by device (i.e. desktop, laptop, tablet or phone) and users should find it much easier to navigate and find out what is going on.

Please do spend some time to navigate around the site, and my explanations here are unlikely to do it enough justice; my particular favourites are:

The Route Map (found within the "Home" pull-down menu).

This is a Google maps based viewer, where we've been able to clearly reconstruct the canal route, and superimpose pin points for each of our existing restoration sites, which in turn will lead you to individual pages for each of those locations. Don't worry if you're local area isn't there yet, as the pages will expand as the restoration continues.

The Derby Arm (found under "Derby Arm & River Navigation" pull-down menu).

This page showcases the Derby Arm which we're intending to build on the Wyvern near Pride Park. It will be a magnificent engineering structure that (we hope) will become a great tourist attraction and really put the restored Derby & Sandiacre Canal on the map! I particularly love the video; which really lets you see what it could look like when complete.

The Calendar (found with its own button on the home page)

This page helps to pull all of the various meetings and activities into one location, so anyone and everyone can see what we're doing! Those viewing by desktop or laptop will see the various events and been colour-coded, otherwise it can be quite daunting to realise how much we achieve in one month!

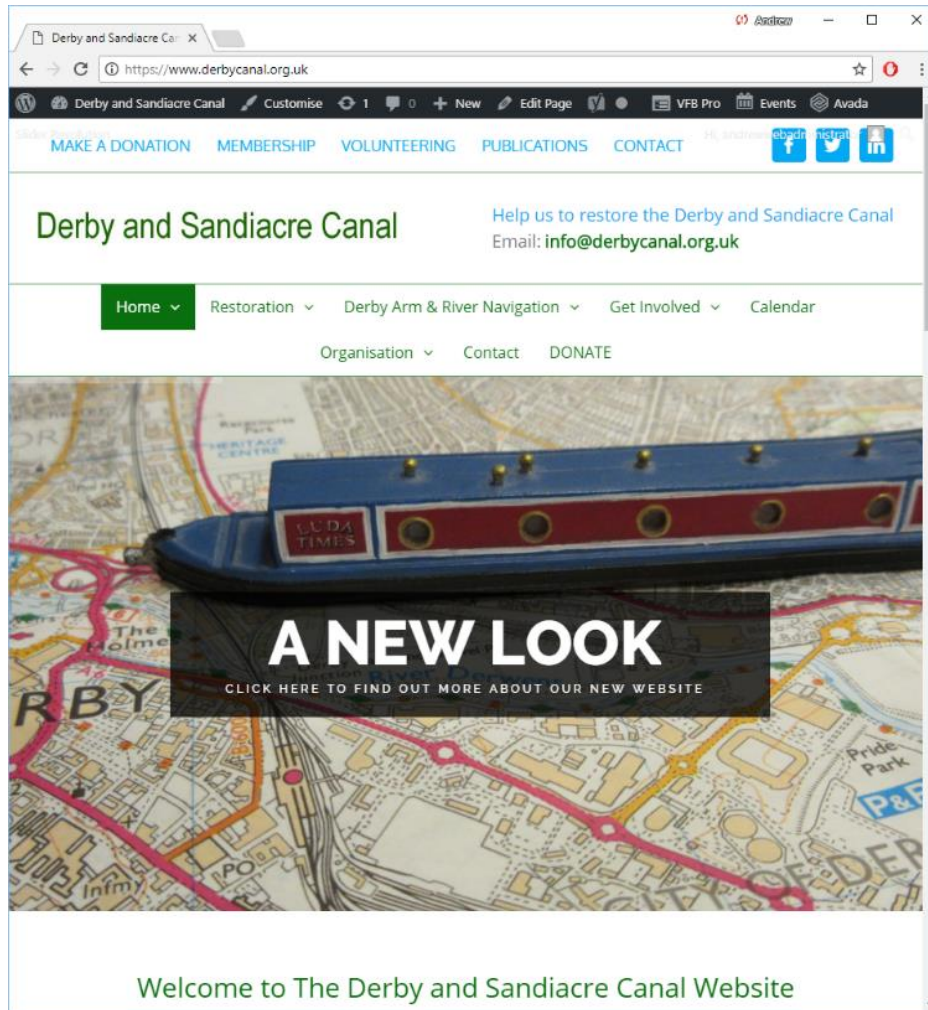
Feel like coming along to your first working party? Find out when and where via the Calendar.

Want to know the topic of the next Society Social meeting? Check out the Calendar. And if you think something should be on there, and isn't? Feel free to get in touch at web@derbycanal.org.uk and provide the details.

Having transitioned to the new site, we're still trying to organise the plethora of old and new pictures, with the aim to make it easier to produce good looking, informative articles, posts and pages for our users and members. As we receive more content, more good news and more support the website will naturally expand to keep people informed.

If you do have any pictures and images of interest you would like to share with the Trust, please email web@derbycanal.org.uk. In addition, if you notice anything that doesn't look quite right, let me know at the same email address.

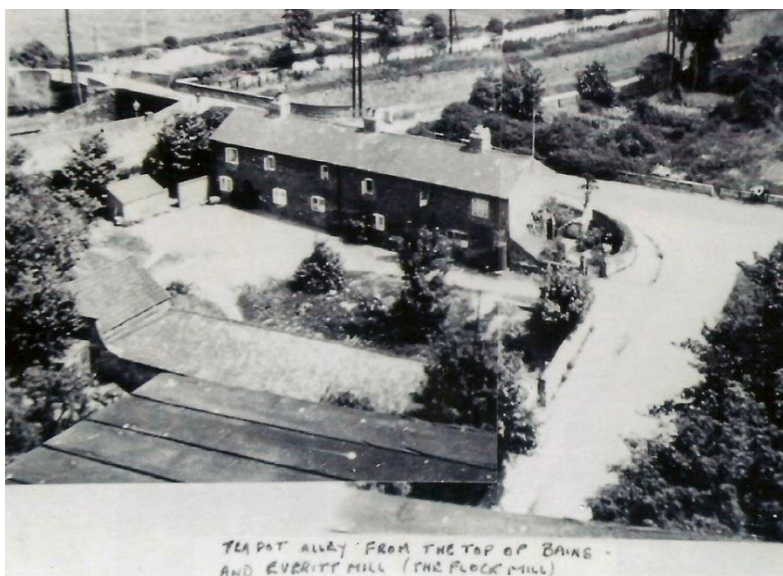
I hope you enjoy the new website, and find it much easier to find out about all the good work we're up to!



A screenshot of the website from the front page.

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Teapot Alley.



Teapot Alley was on the right hand side just over Station Road bridge in Borrowash – the canal and railway are in the top left corner of the picture.

Legend has it that if a tea pot was in the window of a particular house then you didn't knock as the owner was, *ahem!* otherwise occupied!

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Restoration Developments.

Working Parties.

Derby Canal Work; Reflections on 2017.

Activity during 2017 has been at such a pace that the year seems to have raced by and I'd barely recognised that we were rapidly approaching the year end until the first week of December, when I realised that I'd really ought to sort some loose-ends of the canal records for this year.

With one's nose to the grindstone, shoulder to the wheel and hand on the coffee cup/beer mug, attention tends to be a little focussed on the fine detail of the project as seeing the work sites almost every week, the changes that they undergo seem relatively small and long term progress is not so obvious, especially if you're distracted by a sore nose and a bruised shoulder. Putting the paperwork in order reveals the wider picture of the total work done in the year.

My records show that by early December there have been over 100 canal Work Parties over 2017, (averaging about two per week), comprising 67 at Borrowash East, 14 at the Draycott cut, 12 at the Canal Cottages, and 9 at Sandiacre. In addition, there have been a few dozen work events which, although not recognised as "official" Work Parties, were nevertheless important to keep the main activities operating, (such as equipment repair and maintenance, inspections, marking out, meetings/negotiations with third parties etc.), and of course in addition to that addition, there's the attendance at many shows and other events.

The main thrust of the effort this year has been almost exclusively at sites to the east of Derby namely Borrowash East, Sandiacre and Draycott, the latter, as you may be aware, consisting of the canal cut itself as before but now also at the recently acquired cottages at Hopwell Road.

Site Activities.

Borrowash East 2017.

Borrowash East Work Party activities this year have been mostly been on Wednesday mornings as published on the website. Fortunately, the majority of these sessions have been blessed with good weather with only about a dozen being marginal and only one cancelled due to weather. In addition, other days of the week were worked occasionally as the situation required and if manpower was available. Much of the work at Borrowash East this year could be seen as directly or indirectly concerned with either bed maintenance or lock repair and to satisfy the former, the priority at the start of the year was to drain the upper, (western), part of the cut nearest to Station Road so that work on its bed could commence. For those unfamiliar with Borrowash East, that subsection currently has a sewer encased in a protective earth bridge crossing the cut at approximately half way along the subsection and effectively divides this subsection into two parts. Equality of water level, (i.e. drainage), between these two pieces of the cut is in theory, provided by an installed pipe routed through this earth bridge and passing under the encased sewer. However, this link pipe didn't seem to have been working for years and so the upper, (eastern), part of the cut could not drain properly.



To clarify; this link pipe was in fact is two different pipes of two different styles and two different sizes, one starting from the upstream end and one starting from the downstream end with presumably each doing half of the route through the earth bridge and joined to each other at about half way. After several attempts at clearing this pipe route using a combination of drain rods, extended drills, several other custom-made devices, lashings of elbow grease and a plethora of words that even a seasoned naval rating may tend to avoid, all that we achieved was to sense a blockage by a solid object at about half way, or in other words, the most inaccessible point, (where else?). This blockage was assumed to coincide with the joint between the two

sections of pipe and it was suspected that a tree root had entered the pipe at the joint, taken up residence and totally blocked it. We had little option but to excavate the whole pipe route. This excavation had been deferred to the last resort as it would be time consuming, required the removal of some tree stumps that had their roots wrapped all around the upstream section of link pipe and, as the earth bridge is used as an active footpath, this restricted our scope during each work session as we wanted to leave it in a usable and safe state for foot traffic at the end of each work session. Removal of these tree stumps required brute force carefully applied to avoid damaging the pipe. This job became somewhat easier when the water pump became available and we weren't having to dig by Braille in muddy water. After finally uncovering "the link pipe", it was found that the installation could never have worked as the two pipes that it consisted of, one from either end, were not joined to each other or even near each other, laterally or vertically. The pipework was re-routed, re-laid and is now most effective. It had taken us three months to find the fault and about three hours to fix it, such is life. Still, on the plus side, this experience considerably extended our vocabulary.

The second main focus of the Borrowash East subsection has been involved with the preparation of the bottom, (Shacklecross), lock in preparation for the restoration of its structure, with most of the year off and on, clearing that lock area of vegetation. From mid-June to mid- September the site was made safe for lock work by installing fencing along the access road and in and around the lock area. Brickwork repair of the lower gate recesses began in early September and will probably continue for some weeks yet. This latter job often requires the lock water to be pumped out beforehand especially if there's been much rain, otherwise the work area can be inaccessible.

Other activities were such as regular scrub clearance, plus the removal of about 45 tree stumps from the canal bed from mid-February to mid-June leaving us with only a mere 350 to go. Balsam bashing was from May until September; (this seems to be a losing battle, until we can tidy the cut sufficiently so as to use a more effective clearing method). On the other-hand Japanese knot-weed removal seems to be a battle almost won.

Sandiacre, (Junction with the Erewash Canal).

There's been some activity here tidying the lock approach, the bridge and the lock area. The lock approach had the remains of a collapsed willow removed as it was endangering the bridge and then the approach banks tidied. The ivy smothering the bridge was removed and eastern parapet coping stonework tidied and repointed. Also the lock area itself was tidied and more of its coping stones exposed and cleaned with all this prior to August bank holiday week-end for the IWA festival at Ilkeston.

Subsequently we had a visit from IWA's Waterway Recovery Group to remove two trees which were encroaching on the lock and damaging it. Part of the support activity for this bridge work entailed the retrieval of a coping stone from the cut under the bridge for reinstatement on the parapet. Over several visits, attempts had been made to retrieve this stone using different combinations of tools and methods all at the very acme of stone age technology but to no avail and more



drastic action was required. This made it necessary to go back even beyond the basics to pre-stone age and so for the cause a pair of scantily clad Neanderthals, (Chris M and Yours Truly), tastefully decked-out in loin cloths, (well, shorts), and what had once been, in a previous life, shirts, plus placky sandals, formed a two-man scrum, (the Sandiacre Paso Doble), to hook the mud embedded coping stone out of the cut for refitting to the eastern parapet. Recovery of the stone was, (eventually), successful and took about three quarters of an hour on the day but cleaning of ourselves afterwards took a little longer and reintegration back into contemporary civilisation is yet to be fully achieved.

Note that should you have a burning desire to lose weight, say after Christmas, you may want to consider a picture of two grown-ish Neanderthals mud-wrestling up to their waists and armpits in weedy canal water, hung in your dining area; guaranteed to depress your appetite.

Draycott.

Some considerable work was done mainly in the first half of this year on the section of canal cut near to Derby Road and most especially the removal of scrub from the cut itself but also the replacement of about 25m of the Derby Road fence and hedge-laying of its remainder. Another major job was the hedge-laying of the section from Hopwell Road to the concrete bridge on the off-bank. This thanks to the chainsaw operators and their assistants.

The Canal Cottages.

This part of our project only came into being at mid-year when this property was acquired. Despite that, much has been done with the area surrounding the building, being largely tidied and levelled and with much associated scrub being cut down. In addition, much of the debris found within the building has been removed. All this

largely achieved without detracting from the work at other sites. After the delivery of the storage container, restoration work will commence on the building itself.



Support Activities.

Kit maintenance.

As a water pump was required for use at Borrowash early in the year then one of ours had to be made to work and they'd been stored unused for many years. Repairs were carried out from January to March with most of that time spent cleaning the carburettor followed by cleaning the carburettor, followed by. . . (well you get the picture, stripped only four times), plus remaking of the non-return valve seal. In addition, later in the year a new pump input filter more suited to use in a canal lock was custom made.

The need of a storage container at the Canal Cottages required a solid base area to be made prior to its delivery. This spurred the need to have the ground compactor in our stores serviceable so as it could assist with this work. Maintenance was commenced in November, it took three days to make it serviceable, an hour to test it and half a day to subsequently dig it out of my soggy back lawn.

Operational.

The Work Itself.

In summer and late Spring vegetation is abundant and its clearance is needed before groundwork can be even started, (which can be a waste of valuable man-hours), and while summer weather is nice for standing around, (watching other people work, say), it is not always compatible with physical graft. Winter on the other hand has some advantages for Work Parties as for one thing, vegetation dies off or becomes dormant which simplifies groundwork and activities such as pick and shovel work is not only easier in the in the winter, (provided that the ground is not frozen solid), but also a welcome method of keeping warm. So it seems that we're more productive during the cooler seasons than when it's warmer.

The Crews.

I'd like to thank the hardcore stalwarts who turn up week after week, regardless of weather and despite most being of advanced years, (no kidding, some are even older than me!), that's where the progress that we've achieved is founded. I really must take a couple of pictures of the crews, (you know; one front, one profile, like the police do, just in case), and even some group shots sometime but with some being away for Christmas, I'll wait until the new year when we'll have the full complement, stalwarts and all.

Summary.

It's been a busy year, much work has been done and as a result some significant changes have occurred and I can only see next year being even more busy; we're going to need more man-hours, which probably means more people.

Keef.

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Membership. Roger Ashmead.



It's been a solid 6 months for the membership as we've gained by around 30 since the last Packet. In that time there have been the various announcements about developments along the canal that have stimulated more interest, with a few more joining as a result. Let's hope we can keep it going. Our Chairman would like us to have 1,000 members. That would be quite something!

We have also been more active with respect to membership with committee member Gary acting on my behalf and following up with members who have forgotten to pay their subs. That has helped maintain the membership numbers. We all lead busy lives and it is easy to forget. We do see a number of standing orders cease on occasion too so apologies if you receive a call we're only trying to ensure your membership remains active.

At the AGM it was ratified that there will be more restricted choices in the membership types for new members. The types are now, Standard £15, Family (2 memberships) £20, Life £200, Individual Living Abroad £25, Groups £25 and the Friend membership that is £2/month minimum but any number above that may be nominated. Anyone who joins from now on will only be offered these choices. Existing members may continue as they are and it would be nice if any existing Adult members were to remain at the Standard rate voluntarily rather than change to Concession at 65.

As regards subscription payment, most members are on Standing Order that for me is very easy as the payment is automatic. I have been chasing this year to encourage everyone to update their membership payment in line with the current tariff and very many thanks to all those who have done so. For those of you who have not checked their existing subscriptions, the additional rates are, Concession £8 and Joint Concession £12. If you have a standing order & haven't checked or updated it yet would you please do so? I will continue to keep sending reminders as

every penny is valuable to the Society & Trust as we push to do more restoration work.

There are of course other payment methods than Standing Order. We accept cash via any committee member, cheque (payable to Derby & Sandiacre Canal Trust), Paypal via the website (membership tab is in the top left line of the new web site) or direct bank transfer via BACS to Sort Code 20-63-25. Account Number 30467766. I'm told by my better half, that setting this up first time is the fiddly bit & thereafter it is very easy. Personally I find Paypal easy for a lot of payments but the choice is yours. My address is 172, Sancroft Road, Derby DE21 7LD for cheques.

You will also have noticed that we switched all those who are on e-mail to an electronic membership card that saves us a lot on the postage and 60% of you are already in that group, however that leaves the other 40% or 200 lines of membership without an e-mail address. Is that really the case? Help us reduce our costs and release more money for restoration by joining the electronic club. Send us an e-mail to membership@derbycanal.org.uk from which we can collect your address to join in.

Now, what about more members? How about giving a Gift Membership when you are stuck for a present for a friend or family member? Gift Membership is £20 for a year and includes a Certificate of Membership, the booklet 'The Heritage of the Derby Canal' and free entry to two of the monthly social meetings as a minimum. We may include other relevant booklets & information as available at the time too. The gift can be sent via the sender or wrapped and sent direct to the recipient on your behalf.

And finally, in 2018 there will be a change in the law pertaining to the storage of personal data and how that data may be used for distribution of information to you i.e. information such as advertising our events that include the working parties, social meetings, or barn dances etc. To stay inside the new Law, you will be sent a communication that will require you to respond in the affirmative that you are willing to have your details stored on the data base and also willing to receive all the aforementioned information from the Trust and Society. Failure to agree will mean that the only correspondence you will be able to receive will be your membership renewal request and 'The Packet' magazine. These changes mean that we will have to change our membership forms to allow people choice at the point of joining i.e. it will no longer be an opt out clause but an opt in to receive information. This will happen in the New Year once the wording of the statement is agreed. Please respond by return when the request comes through.

I believe this change is really aimed at use of data by companies to send you blurb and therefore cut down on the volume of unsolicited information/advertising received by the individual. Every organisation is swept up in this, large or small and the fines can be large for non-compliance.

Given all the above please note the Trust and Society never give your data to any party outside of the Society or Trust committees (other than HMRC for the Gift Aid claim and the Trust's auditors). In fact, there are only 5 people allowed access at all. It is stored on a very secure encrypted Cloud site called Huddle – secure enough for the UK Government to use it – then the data is within a database that has its own password that is only ever communicated face-to-face. I am pleased to say that as an organisation we do things by the book with respect to your data.

I do hope you continue to support the Trust and Society and that you feel your membership is building something worthwhile. There is a large amount of time put in by various members that doesn't necessarily show as action on the ground but is necessary to enable the project to proceed. Perhaps in 2018 more of you could come and assist? Everyone welcome.

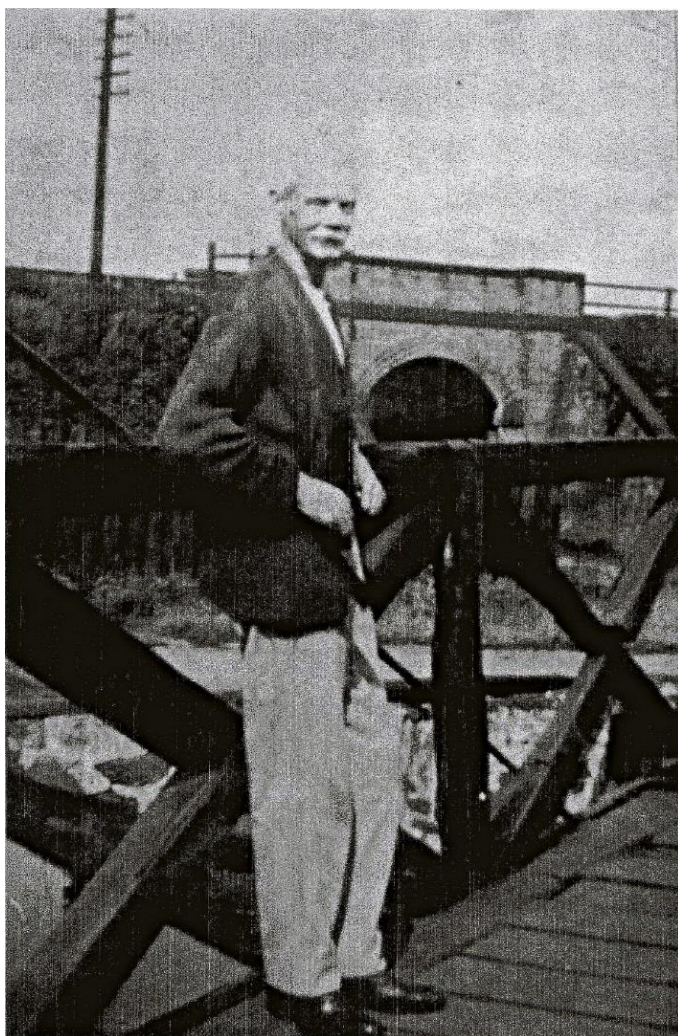
I wish you a prosperous 2018 and I hope to see you somewhere along the canal line during the year be it helping with restoration or simply enjoying it!

Roger Ashmead,

Membership Secretary.

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From the Archives.



Mr. Robert Cull standing on the swing bridge close to Deadman's Lane, Derby in the 1930s. The bridge in the background carries the railway and is still there, filled in. There are allotments there now.

Dumper Truck Appeal.

Following our previous success at being awarded charity funding support from the Co-op stores in Sandiacre and Borrowash, we were surprised to hear that we had been again selected by the Co-op store in Sandiacre and their *Funeralcare* in Stapleford for 2018 as one of their supported charities.

Every time a Co-op member purchase selected own brand products or services, 1% of what they spend goes to the Local Community Fund of that store.

When we were asked to apply for part of the charity fund available from the Sandiacre stores, we looked at the future work that the volunteers may need to do. It was clear that we will need something to move various items on the sites, like soil, vegetation and tools, and it was also required to be able to operate on the narrow restored towpaths. A small wheel base dumper truck fitted all the requirements, and on investigation we found that we could purchase a fairly new second hand dumper truck for under £5,000.

If you are a Co-op member and use the Sandiacre stores, please nominate us as your charity and buy the Co-op's own brands between now and the end of October.

There is a link to the membership website that shows our application and the money raised. <https://membership.coop.co.uk/causes/15111/>



If you are not a Co-op member, you can also donate to our Dumper Truck Fund, either via the website or direct to our Treasurer, Chris Rees Fitzpatrick.

We will be talking to the other stores on the canal route to see if we can be part of their charity support fund, for work on a sections of the canal near to the particular store.

Hope you can help by shopping at the stores or by donating to help move our project plans forwards.

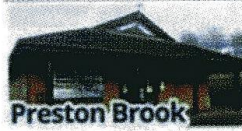
David Savidge.

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Retail and Trade Suppliers of Canal and Narrow Boat Equipment

Midland Changers has been established for over 35 years and is the market leader in the supply of equipment for inland waterways craft. We have four well stocked showrooms based in Preston Brook (Warrington), Braunston (Daventry), Penkridge (Staffordshire) and Willington (Derbyshire).



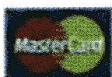
Porta Potti.
QUBE



THETFORD
Loving leisure



THETFORD
Loving leisure



From the Trust.

Thank you – for my send off as outgoing Society Chairman.

Thank you - for the increased support we've seen from members.

Thank you - for the pledges received for the Draycott Appeal.

I'm obviously missing the committee and social meetings, but it's already apparent that you are in good hands with Eddy as Chairman and David as Vice Chair. The excitement of some of the developments of late, particularly around Draycott have brought in new faces to and it makes the transition much easier. Gary Harding has joined to replace Nigel, who stepped down a few months ago. Gary is helping Roger with Membership as you may already know. He is progressively calling members to talk to them about our progress, check database details (perhaps to move to email communication) and also to see if there are any skills that could accelerate our progress. With all the bad press on charities new legislation has been introduced, which means we also have to have a formal agreement from you that we can send you information. So if you receive a call from Gary please feel free to ask what's happening and provide your contact details so we can keep you informed of the progress we're making.

The other means of communicating with you are also progressing well. Gillian has been busy posting to Social Media and thanks are due to those of you who have connected with us, liked the news and encouraged more Facebook members.

In addition, our website has been completely rewritten. We wanted to make the site more accessible, brighter and better able to present us, the restoration and the impact on the local communities that we could achieve. As the challenge becomes more focussed on funding we expect the web site to enable us to convince donors, sponsors and investors to support us. Starting from scratch involved quite a few hours of input from Chris Rees FitzPatrick, Mike Wingfield and Andrew Baird. It launched in September, pretty much on time and the feedback has been really positive. If you've not seen it already take a look on www.derbycanal.org.uk and tell us what you think.

In both areas of communications the vital part is to keep it fresh and Andrew, just like Gillian, is doing just that. I was surprised that at a working party at the cottages Andrew set up a time lapse camera to record the activity. I've never seen our working party members move so fast!! As a result of us trying to focus the organisation Andrew will join the Trust Development Group so we can have direct input to keeping the content "on message" and up to date.

Restoration Developments.

Development Group.

As regular followers will know we are attacking the restoration on quite a few fronts – all at the same time. This means that we need to be well organised to keep the balls in the air and this is the reasoning behind my transfer back to the Trust. Long serving members may remember that I stood in when Judy Flack stepped down. As is so often the case it was intended as a temporary measure, but it's taken nine years to rebuild the committee, find a new Chairman and pass back the responsibility.

In broad terms the Society takes responsibility for many regular activities, particularly working parties, attending events and communicating with members at monthly meetings, by email, by Packet, by Social Media and now by phone. It is often the case that these activities can take away the focus on the longer term goals of restoration that are the aspirations of us all. In simple terms this means that the role of the Trust will be focussed on building external relationships with “stakeholders” i.e. anyone that might be persuaded to help us, developing and updating a restoration plan and raising funding to achieve it. Within these aims we will be taking responsibility for the individual restoration projects listed below.

Of course this does not mean there is a divorce, just better allocation of responsibilities and authority and therefore less overlap. The key is to focus on action rather than committee meetings. Eddy and I will compare notes and Chris Rees FitzPatrick as Treasurer and David Savidge as H&S trustee will be involved in both parts. I’m sure we will need to fine tune the set up, but I can already see benefits accruing.

It might be good to relate the strength of the Development Group of the Trust so that as members you can see how lucky we are with the skills we have, understand where we could strengthen and even offer your help in support. Firstly, as a past member of the Development Group, I want to wish Paul Turner a speedy recovery from his recent health worries. I don’t know if Paul is a psychic, but being in the hospital when it happened was certainly helpful for the treatment. It certainly looks as if Paul is on the path to recovery as he’s already back in action at Rotary looking to persuade them to support our activities near Longmoor Lane.

Our Development Group consists of:

Mike Wood – as an architect Mike is helping us with development plans in the city and Pride Park and with the work we are doing at the Draycott Canal Cottages.

Mike Snaith – Chairman of the Notts. and Derbys. IWA and a source of technical information and contacts with the IWA.

Roger Ashmead – bringing RR engineering experience.

Mike Wingfield –with a passion for Derby city’s development and well connected in RR.

David Savidge – retired from working as a construction manager with an ability to plan site work carefully and safely.

Steve Jeffery – with a lifetime of connections into the development community in Derby.

Duncan Inwood – recently retired planning officer who can guide us through the complexities of planning and S106 funding.

Chris Rees FitzPatrick – retired from the finance industry with a great knowledge of canals as well as funding.

And me with a financial background and experience of managing business growth.

We also have the services of Sarah from JJ Public Relations who has delivered tremendous publicity over the last 6 months and Patrick Swainson delivering technical advice on various drainage issues.

To complete the picture, we are looking for a dedicated fundraiser. This will be a paid position, probably part time with the aim of structuring our approach to raising funds.

Whilst we have been reasonably successful already the scale of funding ahead of us means we need to plan the growth in this area. We will be advertising the post in the new year. If you know of anyone that could deliver for us please let me know. The job specification can be found on www.derbycanal.org.uk/

The Canal Cottages at Draycott.

Our big news in July was the biggest yet. After a few months of negotiation and legal work we had managed to acquire the cottages known locally as the Co-op Cottages. They are located at the Hopwell Road end of the Draycott Golden Mile and we believe the news of the restoration of the canal encouraged the developer-owner to approach us. In truth we had been asking the question for many years so we knew we had to find a way of doing the deal. We also knew that we had to keep it secret to ensure we weren't outbid by another developer. Of course secrecy makes it difficult to do the necessary checks by third party experts, but the experience available on the team allowed us to achieve it with time to spare. It also called upon a very generous Trustee to help establish and underwrite the mortgage.



As soon as we had control we set about planning what we should do with it. We wanted a commercial cafe and shop in place to make the canal line more attractive for visitors. Equally we were aware of the challenges caused by youths breaking into the property and trying to set fires, so it made sense to include some residential property in the mix as this would prevent overnight vandalism for the businesses. We've looked at the layout in conjunction with Robert Ellis, a local estate agent, to see how best to design the houses. As you'll see on the plans we expect three two bedroomed houses from the development which should be sufficient to pay back any loans we need to develop the site. That would mean that the commercial units can be rented out to local

businesses to provide an income to the Trust to fund further projects. It also means that we can dedicate some area as a centre for the Trust and to demonstrate some history/heritage in one of the cottages. We have a great amount of history building and we can attract grants for displaying it.

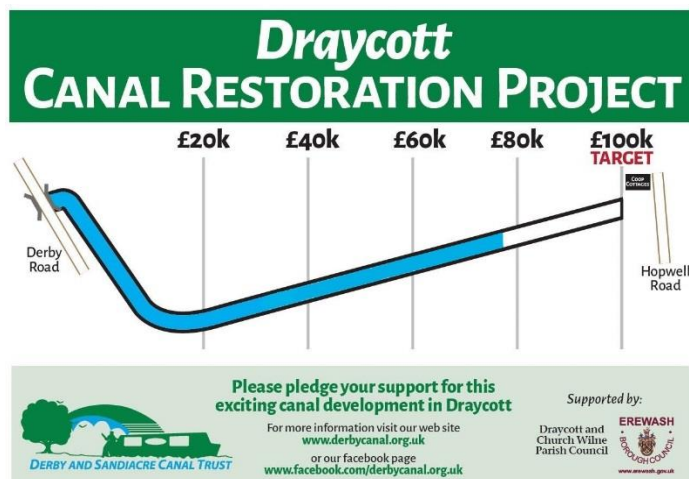
The key stages we knew we needed to undertake were to obtain plans for design in place, then to cost up the work so we knew how much money we needed to raise for the project as a whole. Mike Wood produced a detailed construction specification and a suggested layout for the new design. We've passed this out for a full quote, but have had no real indication after 3 months. We're now looking at a more piece-meal approach so we can pass first base. We also have to deal properly with three bats that had a summer roost in the roof, but advice is being sought on this so they can be relocated safely while building works continue.

The acquisition provided a real spurt to our working parties as you'll read elsewhere and the strength of our working parties will allow us to undertake a significant amount of work by volunteers, which should swell the profitability and raise funds for future sections.

As soon as we achieved the sale we were able to publicise the news and a few months later I was delighted to be on East Midlands TV to show off the project - thanks to Sarah's PR. This provided a further increase in credibility overall and interest in helping us to succeed.

As a result of this publicity we held an Open Day at the cottages on 19th November. We publicised it on Radio and in the Bygone sections of the Derby Telegraph as well as other local papers. We didn't charge and we advertised the opportunity to find out about some history and see inside the cottages. Perhaps the most important impact of the cottages and the clearance work has been that people now believe we will restore the canal. That is no mean achievement after more than 20 years!

The "Golden Mile" Pledge Progress.



As you will have seen we have made excellent progress in raising pledges for the stretch of canal at Draycott. We had a good boost at the IWA show where we managed a TV appearance and a subsequent more specific article a month later. This gave us a boost. Most of all the impact has come from the Cottage acquisition and I'm delighted to say that we now have an accumulation of pledges (with gift aid), donations and fund raising efforts totalling £77,000.

We are now near our £100k target and the Trust is starting to prepare applications for the matched funding to find the £352k quote for the full canal restoration. Key sources will be land fill tax grants, but we are also looking to have a smaller (and quicker) HLF grant for the combined project including the cottages heritage displays.

So for those of you who have already signed the pledge we hope to be asking for the money in the summer; for those that haven't there is time to make all the difference and push us over the line. Since the original plan was developed it has expanded and as well as trailboats, fishing and canoes we are now also considering outdoor swimming – perhaps as part of a special Triathlon. However, I don't think you'll see

any Trustees participating in their lycra. We are also considering a few live-aboards with facilities for sports and residents at the cottages.

Borrowash.

The progress at Borrowash is covered elsewhere, but the Trust is particularly pleased that we entertained a WRG Forestry team in October and will host a week long camp in the summer. To have the support of the IWA in this area is a tremendous vote of confidence in our overall progress, particularly as it was around 15 years ago that they last came to Borrowash.



Gate recess reconstruction at Borrowash.

IWA/C&RT Relationships.

It is interesting that the IWA has launched their Restoration Hub and I believe it will provide invaluable help for us in future, particularly on technical issues. We are actively supporting this initiative and I have been invited onto the “High Level Panel” which is part of the strategic development of the Hub. This is not only further recognition of our progress, but an opportunity to obtain help from the other great teams of restorers around the country.

C&RT have recently changed the structure regarding restorations and have appointed a very pleasant young man called Sam Anderson Brown, who came to look at us just before Christmas. He will be assessing restorations for C&RT and prioritising those that they don't own and allocating support accordingly. I think David and I gave a good account of ourselves. Fingers crossed.

We didn't clear the Alders overhanging the railway line thanks to Network Rail, but are planning to get back to it next year when the line is closed during the imminent works at Derby. We'll need to do it as we have a large number of whips and tree saplings donated by the Woodland Trust to plant in mitigation on the other side of the canal, etc.

Sandiacre Lock Excavation.

This project continues to move slowly (especially with the Draycott distractions), but it does continue to move. We have now secured a grant of £12,500 (half the amount we requested) from EBC Rural Communities Scheme to go with about £50k S106 money from the Westerman estate at Waterside Close in Sandiacre and a land fill tax grant. We are now looking for the best price for the disposal and hope to make progress on reducing the £100k quote in the new year. When we do we can proceed quickly. The Council has agreed that the lock chamber can remain open so we won't have to refill it – thank heavens.

Our thanks are due to Mick and Carole Golds (again). We decided to spruce the site up ready for the IWA show and to take off the ivy on the bridge. We didn't realise that this would loosen the parapet stones sufficiently to allow bored youths to play Pooh sticks with them. When we retrieved the coping stone from the canal Mick kindly fixed them back in place – and gave us a few tips on blocklaying. We are amazed that the enlarged finger board and large sign on the bridge visible from the Erewash are still intact after 4 months.

Derbyshire County Council.

The change in administration seems to have been a positive move, although we still wait to meet the Regeneration Lead Member (based in Ilkeston). The land sale is now expected to be completed in the next month or so, which will ease the management of work at Sandiacre lock and start to increase the work load on maintenance.

Rail Developments.

The current governmental decision not to electrify the Midland Main Line was a blow as it would have saved money and eased considerably the challenge of raising the road crossing at Station Road Borrowash.



Borrowash Station Road bridge from the east with the railway to the left

The continued talk of HS2 planning has largely avoided us, but with one notable exception. Various studies are working out how to connect The Hub at Toton with Derby and our canal line is mentioned as one option. There is substantial objection to it in Erewash, but we continue to work on restoring the canal and hope they don't find a way to float trams!

There are also a lot of studies going around to look at access by road to Toton and suggesting additional exits from the A52 and closing off the junction with Bostocks Lane. This would help us to get under Bostocks Lane – one of our major challenges – but it would drastically affect Breaston as a new road would go through the village – we think. There has also been Metro study which talks about a larger conurbation joining Derby with Nottingham to increase our combined influence and connect to

HS2. We don't know whether any of the schemes will go ahead and we simply log our objections in the meantime.

There is also a proposal to develop Celanese into a large housing estate and plans are being assessed, however if this is to be put into place there will need to be a bridge across the railway as the old Spondon Level Crossing will not suffice. This may work to our advantage and Duncan has been working to ensure that any development provides some S106 grants for us.

Derby City Developments.

Those of you using the A52 into Derby will notice that the Derby Triangle access works are under way. We continue to push for a meeting with the developer, but without success to date. DCC are pushing them on our behalf. DCC's view is that we should now be in a position for talks – but we still wait.

Our activity to promote development of the river continues as planned, although timings are slipping a little. Rolls-Royce apprentices have produced the working model of the Arm under Mike Wingfield's guidance. It is looking good and will be available to show in January. RR are so pleased with the project that Mike has already set up next year's project to investigate eco boats for the river trips.

The video/animation has been specified and is developing well. The drone flight took place in the summer and this is now being incorporated into the new look animation. Duncan Hewitt has already produced the Arm site including restaurants along the line and the visitor centre and is well into the marina site proposed for the underused rail sidings to the north of the river near Bass' Recreation railway bridge. Just the city to go and we will be able to present that together with the model to local businesses.

Also in the summer we worked with the Midlands Canoe Club to survey the river depth from the Council House to the Arm site and found that no major shallows exist to prevent narrowboat traffic. The results are available on the website.

Despite offers of help we have not been able to progress the marketing studies with the University. We are now looking to assess traffic in other ways and have spoken to the Silk Mill directors to understand their approach when securing their £16m funding package.

We have agreed in principle to removal of a sluice at Spondon as it will not affect the level of the river. As part of this we will need to relocate the abstraction point to Pride Park. DCC have agreed in principle to a pumping station on their land (in many years time) and we are working to have a licence in place with them.

This will secure our abstraction licence, which we were delighted to see cost us a de minimis amount of £25 last year. A very worthwhile investment!

We have also been asked by our Trustee Officer, who is now Regeneration Director, to consider putting a trip boat on the water between the Council House steps and Darley Abbey. We have looked at the proposition and are working to make it happen. We plan to run it from an embarkation point by the Silk Mill (this will encourage traffic to them and vice versa when they reopen in 2020) and run a small boat - 12 or less we are advised- to the Council House and up to the next weir at Darley Abbey.

Current plans are being actively supported by the Council who have assigned an officer to assist.



Mike has suggested and we have agreed that we will aim to make the boat electric. This represents a sign of our eco credentials and means that commentaries promoting the heritage and canal restoration will be clearly heard. Mike is now into all sorts of discussions regarding charging points and battery specification to make sure it is a practical and safe means of operating. With so many companies dealing with

transport and engines in the area we are confident we can create something innovative. We are hoping that the Council will find some funds to at least split the cost of the boat.

So we could be joining the other Societies and raising some funding from a trip boat next year. If you could spare some time for advice or to crew the boat, please let us know.

Thanks for your continued support. Please get involved as much as you can in whichever way suits you.

Chris Madge.

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Continuous Cruising – Living on a Narrowboat.

An article written by Peter & Jeanette Earley for The BCNS magazine "Boundary Post" and reproduced here by kind permission.

So, you want to join the ranks of that hardy band, Continuous Cruisers? You do realise that besides having to endure all that British weather may throw at us, you will also be reviled by half of the canal population as a free loader despite canal living being no cheaper than living on the bank.

Not for us the easy existence in a Marina with access to electricity and other essentials.

Actually, you'll be joining a very select group. According to the 2007 accounts of BW, there are only 2,175 licence holders registered as Continuous cruisers so that makes us very much a minority interest. It's a pity that we don't get as much interest or money as some other minority groups. After all, the road travellers in their coaches and caravans have their own parliamentary spokesman.

As a genuine Continuous Cruiser, there is one rule with which you have to abide. You should only stay in one “area” for no more than 14 days. “Area” is not defined but is generally accepted to be a parish and you still have to take notice of any local mooring conditions such as time limits. Of course, there are always exceptions to this such as being taken ill, mechanical breakdown, and the like but you should always try to get permission from C&RT before overstaying. As you cruise the system you might think you’re the only one obeying the rules as the outskirts of many towns and cities are marked by “illegally” moored boats together with their attendant detritus and parked cars.

You, of course, won’t have a car and, probably, no job either.

You will also have to keep a log of your journeys to prove that you have been cruising continuously. Not that anyone ever asks to look at it! However, it is useful to know whether the ice is earlier or later than last year, when you saw the first cygnet born, and to prove your fuel usage when claiming other than the “standard” 40/60 split on fuel duty.

Every year there are stories of people with no previous experience selling their house, buying a boat and sailing off into the sunset, or at least to Birmingham. This is just plain daft. Even if you’ve had a few summer holidays on the canals this won’t prepare you for conditions in February. We thought we were experienced; 20 years of hiring then 8 years of shared ownership meant there wasn’t a month in the year when we hadn’t cruised. Even so, it has been a steep learning curve.

When deciding on your boat there are a number of decisions to be made that will be difficult to unmake later. When you get together with other boaters, inevitably you will end up talking about toilets. These divide into pump-out and cassette.

Pump-out has the advantage of looking like a normal toilet and it will last at least a couple of weeks between emptying. Indeed, some people manage to make their tank last for 3 months or more. They must make a lot of use of shore facilities such as pubs or keep their legs crossed a lot. Emptying them however, will cost up to £18 or so a time. Emptying a cassette on the other hand is usually free but a full one is heavy and will need doing every couple of days. So, you pay your money and take your choice. Oh, and whichever system you decide on, at some time it will block!

Very important is your bed as you’re going to spend rather a lot of time in it. In a hire boat the bed always runs fore and aft. You may have noticed that it is only 4 feet wide and that you are always digging your elbows and knees into your partner’s back. The one who draws the short straw to sleep on the inside also has the risk of

sudden shock on accidentally touching the cold side of the boat.

But, if you don’t mind the narrowness, it has the great advantage of being



permanently made up. Of course, you can always have an extension to one side to give you the luxury of a king size bed but you've lost all the advantages. The cross bed, on the other hand, gives you the king size but can be a bit uncomfortable if you are taller than 5'10". Climbing over the bed though keeps you fit and it also means that whoever sleeps on the kitchen side always makes the morning cuppa!

Everything on a boat is a bit of a compromise but you will need as much storage as is humanly possible. You cut down on your cooking utensils, convert all your CDs to MP3s, stick all the family photos on your hard drive, stick the wellies in that tiny space at the back but it's clothes that take the space. That great idea the vacuum bag, must have been made with boaters in mind. Not only does it enable you to pack your spare clothes into a tiny space but also it keeps them dry. You will come to accept the scourge of condensation in time! When living in a house we took central heating for granted. We assumed we could do this despite the cost of diesel. A big mistake! The heating systems generally fitted to boat are not suitable for residential use and, furthermore, any warranty won't usually cover this use. There are some systems on the market designed for 24-hour use but they are not small and, given the pressures on space on a liveaboard, may not fit. Being children of the 60s, well 50s actually, we've never really had coal fires at home so we thought we could do without one on board. From our experience with the shared ownership boat, we found them to be dusty and the heat could sometimes be unbearable. Our first winter found the diesel heating expiring from overuse on the coldest week of the year so we bit the bullet and had a multi-fuel stove fitted. The boat is now as warm as toast but guess what, it's dusty and the heat can sometimes be unbearable. Still, we can always open the front doors!

You will be living in close proximity with your partner in a space not much longer than 50 feet. This inevitably will lead to the occasional argument. Make sure your boat has at least one door that can be closed with a satisfying slam!

Once on board permanently, you will be a person of no fixed abode. This is not acceptable in today's Britain where the first piece of information you are always asked for is your postcode. To have a credit card. A bank account and a BW licence, you will need a permanent address on shore. This is why you have children. They've used your home as a convenience for years; it's your turn now. Make sure you have a new passport and driving licence showing their address so you can then apply for a bus pass from the local Council. All your post can go there for your children for your children to deal with. Most of it will be rubbish anyway but the important stuff can always be scanned and emailed to you. If it is something that you need to sign, the Royal Mail's Poste Restante system works very well. It is one of the places where you need to prove who you are so don't forget to take that new driving licence.

Another item that seems to generate much hostility amongst some other boaters is the washing machine. Complaints about hogging the water point being the usual complaint. It may be that these

People don't wash their clothes too often but to rely on launderettes is a no brainer. First you have to find one, it's usually a long walk with a heavy bag of washing, you need an inexhaustible supply of £1 coins and when you take the washing out you find the previous user had washed his overalls after creosoting the fence. So go for an on-board machine if you have the space

Having mentioned water, don't pass a water point without filling up. You may have a tank that would keep a family of 5 going for a fortnight but, if you do pass a water point, you can bet your life that the next one will have 6 boats waiting or will not be working. This is even more important during the winter months when you can go to bed on a relatively mild night to wake to a few inches of ice

As most of us get older we need to take various medications to make life easier. We are lucky in that the doctor we have been registered with for years continues to keep us on her list despite knowing we no longer live in her area. At first we took our repeat prescriptions to a local doctor, registered as a temporary patient, and eventually received a new prescription. However, no two doctors seemed to be the same. Sometimes we would receive enough medication for 2 months, at other times just for 2 weeks. Sometimes we were subjected to the third degree, on others we



saw no one but a receptionist. Eventually we started posting the prescription form to a friend with a stamped addressed envelope for wherever we expect to be in the next fortnight. He drops it in to our doctor, collects the new form and pops it in the post. There will be times when you become unwell and the need to visit a local doctor. This is easy. You have a form to fill in as a temporary patient for which you will need the dreaded postcode. I use the one for the nearest pub or supermarket. You will be asked if you are staying for longer than 14 days. (Not the same 14 days as C&RT surely!) This is where you need to lie and say yes. Otherwise, you will only receive enough medication to last until you are out of that doctor's area and are someone else's problem.

You've made all your preparations and are afloat so now you need to make some plans.

"Plans!" I hear you say. We are free agents. We'll go where the wind, actually diesel power, takes us. If only it were so. Firstly, all your friends and relatives will want to visit and see what it is that made you lose your senses. They would rather travel to France than find their way to Macclesfield. You'll need to feed them so easy access to Tesco's or Sainsbury's is necessary as is plenty of booze to calm you down when they've gone. There's the BW stoppage list to take into account and you need to consider winter whilst you can still move. It is no good being miles from the nearest water tap when the canal freezes over. Not that you can guarantee the tap will work when you do reach it. So, some forward planning is required even if it is somewhat loose. You will make a pact before you start that you are not going to cruise if it is raining or blowing a gale. You can forget that. Having made a plan that you didn't want in the first place, you can bet it will rain every day when you just have to move.

Boats are complicated things and will go wrong, usually at the worst possible time. Besides our heating breaking down, our generator failed a few days before Christmas, 2007. "So what", you might say but on a gas-free boat it was a bit awkward. Of course, you're a DIY expert so you will have a full tool kit and all the

spares your limited storage, and your partner, will allow. At the very least I recommend you should be able to carry out your own engine service. If you think you can rely on boatyards for any repairs, then think again. You are used to phoning the garage, booking your car in for a service on a particular day and it being done that day. Just as we cruise the canals at a leisurely pace so do boatyards work. You must remember that the parts used on your boat might not be that common. Next time you are in the Chandlers see just how many different water and bilge pumps there are. It won't be long before you're obsessed with your battery power, sticking your voltmeter into a socket at every opportunity to see the state of charge. After a while power conservation becomes second nature so then you can obsess about how much water you are using. Whatever appliances you choose you need to look at their power consumption. There are some quite low power mains units that won't deplete your batteries too much but you must always remember that 1,000w toaster will pull 90amps from your batteries, if only for a shortish period.

Batteries are only a storage medium. There is only so much you can get out of them before damaging them irreparably. The more power you use, the longer you need to run your engine or generator the next day to fill it back up.

You will also become used to the morning "wipedown". Condensation is big problem on a boat. The amount varies from boat to boat and depends on the outside temperature and humidity. Cooking generates a lot, both from stem and from the gas used. The bathroom is another culprit but the biggest offender is us, whilst we keep breathing, there is nothing we can do about it. When we stop breathing the problem will go away, permanently! Plenty of ventilation will help, as will a decent heating system and a bit of double-glazing, but a bit of extra insulation seems to push the problem to a different part of the boat.

So get wiping!

Travelling about on shore can sometimes be a problem. Without your own car you either have to walk, cycle, bus, taxi, train or hire a car. You will quickly realise that pedestrians and public transport come very low in most Council's priorities. Pedestrian routes to most supermarket and retail park entrances, are obviously placed by architects who never actually walk anywhere. Most of these places have well-worn paths through the flowerbeds and over the fences where pedestrians have taken the shortest route. Pavements that suddenly end, only to start again on the opposite side of a busy road, are all too common. Pedestrian crossings are timed for the convenience of the motorist, not poor you waiting in the rain.

Having successfully obtained your bus pass, you will then be introduced to that great work of fiction, the bus timetable! You will meet some wonderful people and listen to the life history of not a few and that is just the drivers. Take pity on them, having to charge around the country at breakneck speeds to meet unrealistic timetables in aged vehicles that belong to a third world country. The oldest we've travelled on was 21 years old! You will also find that large tracts of England are cut-off in the evenings and at weekends. Even in a town the size of Bedford, the last bus from the town centre to the marina we were moored in was at 6.15pm and there was no Sunday service at all despite there being a large leisure complex next door.

To keep in contact with your family and friends, there is the mobile phone.

It is one of the wonders of the modern age that it is possible to talk with astronauts on the moon but try to find a signal on your phone on the summit level of the K & A! If you can, make sure your partner's phone is on a different network from yours. That way you have a fighting chance that one of your phones will work. Internet access is the same. You become used to slow connection speeds after a while but it can be very frustrating when you are trying to pay your credit card bill before the due date. Many CCers make use of home shopping for foodstuffs. It is not something we have used but I understand that Tesco are the most accommodating. Provided that you can give them the dreaded postcode, they will deliver direct to the boat.

Talking of the Internet, there are a number of canal related forums, which can offer you some good advice. However, be careful what you say. Threads on these forums are often 'hijacked' by those with an axe to grind. Asking an innocent question about generators, for instance, will bring a tirade from others who see living afloat as some sort of green crusade and that we should all be reading by candlelight, washing our clothes in the cut and scavenging the hedgerows for fuel. Just remember that it is your life and you can live it how you wish providing C&RT will let you.

In the winter you can cruise for days without seeing another moving boat but in the summer it will be completely different. Every lock will have a queue of hirers who will ask the inevitable questions: "Do you live aboard?" "How long have you done so?" "Doesn't it get cold in the winter?" and a few similar questions before the big one, "How much did your boat cost"?

So welcome to the club and, if you pass a boat called 'Joanie M' – slowly of course, give us a wave. We'll always wave back.

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For those too young to remember 'Last of the Summer Wine', one of the characters was Auntie Wainwright who had an emporium selling second hand items.

She was so persuasive that any one entering always came out with something, puzzled as to why they had bought it!

An apparition of Auntie Wainwright appeared at the Boat Festival on the Erewash a couple of months ago and proceeded to sell bricks to people, raising £30 in 10 minutes – the D & SC stall holders were absolutely amazed at being subjected to a master class – but those who had seen this apparition in the past knew better, as it was the re-incarnation of a past Chairman. Da Da Daaaa!



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